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Talmey, Max

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DEFECTS OF ESPERANTO, ITS DECLINE AND THE GROWTH OF ILO

*An address delivered in the New York Ilo Society on the first meeting of the
new year, January 21st, 1909*

BY DR. MAX TALMEY

*Founder and first President of the former New York Esperanto Society,
author of a complete Esperanto textbook, former member of the
International Linguistic Committee for Esperanto.*

According to the definition given to Esperanto by its faithful adherents, Esperanto is the artificial language devised by Dr. L. Zamenhof, of Warsaw, to be a common means of international communication, with the express purpose in view of establishing mutual love between nations and individuals, the practical advantages to science, commerce and diplomacy being irrelevant. This is the so-called "internal idea" of the Esperantism. But, beautiful as it may sound, it is entirely fallacious. A common international language is not the means which will bring mankind to the high ideal of mutual love. As the writer has shown in a satire published in the "Progreso" (May, 1908), history, from the most ancient times until our very days, refutes sufficiently that a common speech is able to banish hatred between nations.*

That mutual love between individuals will be established through the international language, that the latter will eradicate dishonesty, meanness, hatred, the tendency to lie, to calumniate and to injure the reputation of others is best disproved by the actions of the adorers of the Esperanto cult themselves. No sooner did they learn that some excellent connoisseurs of the language began to show to others that it was philologically defective, than they undertook a campaign of personal attack upon their private character, trying

* "Oh, ye natural languages, what are you good for! Your charms which the most enraged advocate of an international language would not dare to deny, have not accomplished anything for the mutual love between men. The Hebrew prophet had to lament that one Hebrew tribe tried to devour the other although both spoke the holy language of Jehovah. The Greek republics comprehending one another by the wonderful language of Homer, were always lying in one another's hair, to use a German phrase. The Irishman loves the Englishman as the mouse loves the cat, although both understand Shakespeare's wonderful speech. The Austrians and Prussians engaged in bloody wars with each other, notwithstanding the charming language of Goethe and Heine common to both. The South American republics have constantly brotherly, though cruel, fights, between themselves in spite of the beautiful Spanish language which is their common tie.

"Consider, however, ye natural languages, what benefits will be derived for all the nations from the international language. It will cause the Japanese, filled with love to mankind, to embrace the Russian. The Kossack will not torment the Jew any more with the knout before strangling him. When the time will have arrived in which even the beasts will be able to speak, they will learn the international language and the saying of the above mentioned Hebrew prophet will be fulfilled who spoke thus: 'And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie near the kid, and the young lion with the calf and the fating, and a young boy will lead them. And the cow and the bear will pasture together that their young may lie together. And the lion will eat hay together with the ox. And the sucking child will play over the hole of the viper, and the weaned child will stretch its hand into the den of the serpent.' They will not hurt nor destroy, for the world will be full with the knowledge of the international language as the sea is covered with water."

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Consider, however, ye natural languages, what benefits will be derived for all the nations from the international language. It will cause the Japanese, filled with love to mankind, to embrace the Russian. The Kosack will not torment the Jew any more with the knot before strangling him. When the time will have arrived in which even the beasts will be able to speak, they will learn the international language and the saying of the above mentioned Hebrew prophet will be fulfilled who spoke thus: And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie near the kid, and the young lion with the calf and the fattling, and a young boy will lead them. And the cow and the bear will pasture together, that their young may lie over the hole of the viper, and the weaned child will stretch its hand into the den of the serpent. They will not hurt nor destroy, for the world will be full with the knowledge of the international language as the sea is covered with water."

to defame it by all kinds of unfounded gossip, published later in their journals. They did not attempt at all to disprove the correctness of their philological views. To discuss these publicly they were afraid, because it might set people thinking. Marquis de Beaufront, the greatest authority on Esperanto, Dr. Zamenhof not excepted, and Dr. L. Couturat, the greatest authority on the problem of an international language, were represented as outcasts of the human race, and roasted alive. The abuse heaped upon de Beaufront, who was all ways guided by the most noble and most disinterested motives, caused the writer to send him a public letter of sympathy, published in the "Progreso" (October, 1908). The editor made the following comment upon it: "We publish this letter following the request of the author, in spite of its somewhat personal tone. For it expresses the opinion of one of the pioneers of Esperanto in the new world, who consequently knows Esperanto and the Esperantists well. Besides, this is the opinion of many of our friends and contrasts strongly with the one which the fanatics try to inspire to the credulous 'fidelists.'" Others are sharing a similar fate at the hands of the preachers of mutual love for their heretic views. The writer has castigated such a base campaign for the establishment of an international language—the more base because it is carried on by those pretending to work only for the moral betterment of mankind—in the above-mentioned satire.*

While the fallacy of the "internal idea" would not disqualify Esperanto for the rôle of an international language, its philological defects render it entirely unfit for this function. The imperfections of Esperanto are the following:

1. The alphabet contains letters (ĉ, ĝ, ĥ, ĵ, ŝ) not possessed by any printing press, and therefore rendering the publication of Esperanto works very expensive. The use of an h instead of the "roof" is not genuine Esperanto and has not been accepted, for it would render the language more hideous to the eye than it is now. That "any modern printing office can add the necessary Esperanto equipment for \$2?" is not true. Any printer will disprove it. This assertion was recently made in a prominent journal. The latter had declined to give to the writer more space for a criticism of Esperanto than it did with the remark that its readers were not interested in Esperanto. His article had been shortened several times, so that it took six weeks before it finally appeared with its marrow taken out of it. A reply from an opponent, however, three times as large as the criticizing article, appeared in the journal only one week later. It defended the accentuated letters with the assertion mentioned, and added as a proof that the journal had printed them without any hitch in the criticizing article. And indeed this

* "Truly, divine love between man and beast will reign in the world! But it will exist only for those who will accept the language fully and unconditionally and will promise to regard it as a divine creation that must not be touched. As in the present time hardly 50 out of a hundred adorers of the cult understand the language sufficiently only to stammer it a little, although they boast everywhere that they speak it perfectly, so also in the future it will not be necessary to know the language very much to be entitled to that divine love. But woe, if one knowing the language a hundred times better than the hundredth of the above mentioned hundred should find and declare publicly that the language contains only a few good features, and that in the rest it swarms with absurdities, and will demand that they be removed and the language perfected! From that moment the divine love does not exist for him any more. He is a rebel! He is a liar, dishonest. They will try to destroy his reputation. They will send him into the world with the task to show to the faithful that he is an outcast of the human race. (Such an emissary came to this country about a year and a half ago and tried to change the character of Mr. Couturat in the eyes of the writer, but he succeeded only in making him later so disgusted with the so-called Esperantism that he soon severed all his connections with it.) In short they will kill him morally and spiritually, and it is not quite certain that a physical homicide will not be carried out for the salvation of the good cause. When all the chiefs and foes will have been thus killed, every time a new 'rebel' will arise he will be killed morally or physically. In this way the world will contain only faithful ones and friends. A small part of them will speak the language a little, but for the great majority will count. They will all be united in 'sacred harmony' and will form in consent one great family circle."

had astonished the writer. For the firm, one of the biggest in New York, that had printed an Esperanto textbook of his, needed three weeks to get the matrices for those letters, and this at a cost of nearly \$100, which explains why the price of this book is much too high for its size. But after the appearance of the reply the writer found the explanation for what had astonished him before. The journal was not as impartial as it wrote it was. The writer's article had been given to his opponent long before its appearance, so that the reply could be published within a time shorter even than the time its preparation has probably required. The accentuated letters were furnished the journal by the management of an Esperanto publication appearing in the same city as the journal and working together with the author of the reply. Now, there is nothing to say against the journal being in favor of Esperanto. But the treatment conceded to the writer and to his opponent shows that the sense of fairness even of good people becomes obtuse when they come in contact with the preachers of brotherly love to all mankind.

2. Esperanto, especially in every-day phrases, has an abominable sound, due to the extreme frequency of the harsh sibilants (ĉ) and the endings aj, oj, uj. Almost unpronounceable sounds (h) and combinations (sc) also occur. For example: ĉio tio ĉi, all this; ĉiujn tiujn kiujn, all those whom; ĉar ŝi scias ĉion, for she knows everything; ĉu ŝi ĉiam rugiĝas? does she always blush? The fanatic Esperantists when defending the lack of euphony in Esperanto always offer this argument (Journ. of the American Medical Assoc., Jan. 16, 1909, p. 228): "As well condemn the English language on account of the old schoolboy catch: Chichester church stands in Chichester churchyard." This sentence is so far-fetched that a person may reach the age of Methusalem without ever arriving at the necessity of having to use a similar sentence. It would take weeks of thinking to produce in the English language a few other sentences with so disagreeable a sound, while in half an hour any number of teeth-breaking, jarring Esperanto sentences can be constructed, all referring to things and events of every-day life. Besides "ĉuod liect Jovi, non liect bovi" is a saying of which the fanatics ought to be reminded when they compare English with Esperanto. But "de gustibus non est disputandum"; when the writer cited to an Esperantist the following every-day sentence, sounding like the hissing of a snake: "Ĉar ŝi ne scias, ĉu ŝia ĉapelo estas tie ĉi aŭ ĉe ŝia ĉambro, serĉu ĝin ĉie, since she does not know whether her hat is here or in her room, look for it everywhere," he received the answer: "Why, you find this sentence non-euphonic! To me it sounds like angels' music." De gustibus non est disputandum!

3. Esperanto is greatly illogical in its word formation. The ending of the infinitive is -I. Changing this into -O gives a noun denoting an action. For instance, marŝi, to march, marŝo, the marching; yet vipo, from vipi, to whip, and broso, from brosi, to brush, denote instruments, the whip and the brush respectively. To say that in these instances the instrument is primary and the verb secondary is a flimsy argument refuted by the verb kombi, to comb, of which the noun in -O denotes an action, not an instrument.

-Ilo is a suffix to derive from verbs nouns denoting an instrument. The verb kombi, to comb, follows this rule and forms kombilo, comb, as the instrument, but to the verb brosi, to brush, belongs the noun broso, brush, as the instrument.

-Ado is a suffix to form from verbs verbal nouns denoting an action of continuation or duration. Yet, owing to the faulty system of derivation, there are many exceptions to this rule. FosADO from fosi, to dig, and fend-

AIO from fendi, to split, mean digging and splitting plain and simple without any idea of continuation or duration.

-Ulo (-alino) is a suffix to derive nouns denoting a person characterized by a certain quality. The adjective virga, virginal, follows this rule and forms the noun virgULINO, virgin, while the similar adjective vidva, widowed, gives the noun vidvINO, widow. If virgULINO is correct, vidvINO is wrong, and conversely.

Dr. L. E. (Method. Grammat. d. intern. Spr., p. 46) has pointed out the two absurd formations: sidigi, to sit down, and levigi, to rise. The writer (P. act. and Theoret. Esp. pp. 38, 39) has called attention to the still more absurd verb sciigi, which by virtue of its component parts can mean only to become known or to know one's self, but is used in the meaning to begin to know, to learn.

The absurdity of the word formation in Esperanto has been incontestably demonstrated by Dr. L. Couturat in his excellent study: "Étude sur la Dérivation en Esperanto." The reader is referred to this work for numerous other examples.*

4. The vocabulary of Esperanto is greatly lacking in internationality. The most frequently occurring words, as the pronouns, adjectives and adverbs of time, place, manner, etc., are entirely arbitrary and render the language unintelligible without previous study, even to expert linguists who read and understand other artificial languages almost at sight.

5. Esperanto is very poor in root words. This has led to the adoption of many idiotisms and of absurd compounds. The verb elparoli formed from el, out, and paroli, to speak, means to pronounce, although logically it can mean only to speak out (out of the room). Elrigardi means to have a certain aspect, although it ought to signify to look out of, etc., etc.

6. Owing to the introduction of the accusative case with extremely frequent application and to the declension of the adjective which is changeable according to case and number, Esperanto is much too difficult for persons of average education, and especially of English nationality. This is proven by the fact that with extremely few exceptions, the Esperantists of this country, after having devoted several years to the study of Esperanto, are unable to speak the language beyond stammering a few frequent phrases—although they boast everywhere that they acquire facility in the language in three weeks and can speak it fluently and correctly—and to write a few lines correctly. As the writer has indicated in the Amer. Esp. Journ. (May, 1907, p. 5) his big Esperanto correspondence was so disgusting that it went, hardly glanced over, into the waste basket. Fortunately, a few letters escaped this fate and were now found to substantiate the statement just made. These letters contain many unpardonable grammatical blunders and, coming as they do from people of education and learning, lawyers, newspaper editors, high school professors, they prove that the fault rests not with the writers, but with the language that has created too many stumbling stones. To overcome the telling and damaging effect of the undeniable fact that the Esperantists are unable to observe even the rules contained in their sacred book, the Fundamento, a famous Esperanto leader has put up the simple principle that everything written or spoken in the international language is correct, as long as it can be understood. The writer has shown that this principle can be made more simple yet by adding "and the sense of which can be guessed," and has exposed its ridiculousness in the satire cited ("Progreso," May, 1908, p. 85). While

* It is a pity that this brochure is not for sale. For it is a marvel and model of fine logical reasoning.

the European Esperantists—there are some who are able to—observe strictly the rules of the accusative and the declension of the adjective, the American Esperantists—among whom hardly half a dozen would be found able to follow these rules—are beginning to proclaim that these rules may be neglected. A valiant defender of Esperanto in this country lately permitted the construction: Alportu al mi fresa pansaĵoj, instead of fresajn pansaĵojn. Unfortunately this sentence is unintelligible with any of these two constructions. For a word pansaĵoj does not exist. The writer has ransacked his big Esperanto library of 50 books to find this word or another one from which it might have been derived, but in vain. All this shows that there will soon be an American and a European Esperanto (sic!) and proves that Esperanto, if left to "natural evolution"—a phrase unintelligently used by the defenders of Esperanto who do not know at all its signification in regard to language in general—would soon be split up in as many different languages as there are nations.

That Esperanto is not fit for an international language has been proclaimed by the Committee for the Adoption of an International Auxiliary Language. This committee, composed of great scholars of international renown, convened at Paris in October, 1907, and rejected all artificial languages, Esperanto in its present form included. It adopted, however, a system presented by the Marquis L. de Beaufront, the greatest authority on Esperanto, its inventor not excluded, under the pseudonym Ido. This system, subsequently perfected and enlarged by the Constant Commission of the Delegation, is now known chiefly under the impartial and, therefore, appropriate name Ido—which means international language by its initial letters.

Ilo is as much superior to Esperanto as the latter to the defunct Volapük. In order to attract the Esperantists, the originators and advocates of Ilo represent it as simplified Esperanto. But the correctness of their point of view, the writer ventures to question. For the greatest majority of the Esperantists ought not to be seduced to learn any international language whatsoever. They would do better in devoting their time to perfect themselves in their respective mother tongues. An international language is necessary or rather desirable only for scientists, diplomats and great merchants. It is ridiculous and provocative of the most hostile resistance to the very idea of an international language to offer the latter, as the Esperanto faddists have done, to the school children, the blind, the shop-keepers, the mine laborers, etc. Furthermore, Ilo is not at all simplified Esperanto, for it has in common with the latter only a part of the conjugation, the endings of noun, adjective and adverb, and a few affixes. Everything else in Ilo is common to almost all modern artificial languages, and is not specifically Esperanto.

To offset the effect on the Esperanto movement of the action of the Delegation's committee, Esperanto journals have published reports about it which are partly brazen falsehoods, partly distortions of certain occurrences, and the fanatic Esperantists repeat them knowingly or unknowingly. Thus they reported that prominent members of the committee, as W. Förster, Baudouin de Courtenay, W. Ostwald, Otto Jespersen, have resigned, being against Ilo and for Esperanto. There is hardly a particle of truth in this report. Jespersen is still an important member of the Delegation's Constant Commission and a very active collaborator of the "Progreso," the official organ of the Delegation and of most of the Ilo societies. Almost every number of this magazine, also the January number, contains excellent articles written by Jespersen. W. Ostwald is still president of the Constant Commission, etc.

Following the example of the best Esperantists, the New York Esperanto Society, the pioneer society in this country devoted to the idea of an inter-

national language, in its meeting of October, 1908, adopted Ilo. Notices were then sent out to all members urging them to be present at the next meeting because of the proposed change of the society's name, and in the November meeting a resolution was passed unanimously to assume the title N. Y. Ilo Society.

Evidently Esperanto is already undergoing the same fate as Volapük, and in a few years it will be only of historical interest. But to deceive the public about this, fanatic and mercenary Esperantists spread all kinds of false reports about Esperanto's "wonderful success and growth." One "fidelulo" speaks of 55 Esperanto journals, not mentioning those that have given up the ghost long ago. Another relates that "Esperanto is taught in the public schools of many lands." Fortunately for their pupils, it is merely a dream. Two thousand people in the United States are said to be speaking Esperanto fluently and correctly. A dozen would have been an exaggeration, and these have adopted Ilo. But even if all these reports were true, they would not prove anything. For Volapük could really show such successes, about 1855, and yet it died about 1889, because of intrinsic defects. Esperanto is following it into oblivion for similar reasons, and on account of the folly of the faddists.

Mercenary Esperantists, trying to derive financial gain from the ignorance of the people in Esperanto matters, have formed a business company and are urging the public to take shares in its capital stock, promising a large return for the investment. To catch the gulls, they tell wonders about Esperanto and minimize any event showing that Esperanto is fast losing ground. Thus they brought mendacious reports about the transformation of the New York Esperanto Society into the New York Ilo Society, and, while before they could not extol the New York Esperanto Society high enough, they are now belittling it. They relate that its membership was small and of no importance. But the society has always kept away curiosity seekers and faddists by requiring examinations for admission and by other restrictions, while the societies of the fanatics are counting every one as a member who has ever sent a letter of inquiry to them. Hardly a dozen Esperantists in this country can speak Esperanto fluently and correctly, and the majority of them are members of the former New York Esperanto Society.

In the same manner the fanatics and mercenaries are disparaging Esperanto textbooks which have been engorged by Esperantists not less than by others. Suddenly they have found out that these books are not good, for their authors are now favoring Ilo. In this country an example of an author being abused for his views and his Esperanto textbook being dragged into the mire by the "fidelulo" is the writer. Formerly they recommended his writing as a model (*Amer. Esp. Journ.*, May, 1907, p. 12) and his book as the best English textbook.

Since the public cannot be prevented from learning that some Esperantists are giving up the "kara lingvo," the fanatics report that these apostates are of very little importance and value, and very few in number, while their own numbers are enormous. As to the latter the way they are manufactured is somewhat like this. People read in the newspapers headlines dealing with Esperanto and Esperanto Associations so and so. They wonder what kind of an antediluvian monster that Esperanto is, and write a letter of inquiry to the association. When they hear that Esperanto is merely an international language, they laugh at their funny mistake and pay no further attention to the presupposed monster. Meanwhile their names have been put down on the list of the association, and they are counted as members and faithful Esperantists because they have once asked for information.

The number of adherents of Ilo who have abandoned Esperanto because of its defects is not as small as the "fideluloj" represent it in order to deceive the public. Among the advocates are many illustrious men, any one of whom is of vastly greater importance and value than all the Esperanto editors together. The following men are now advocating Ilo:*

- P. AHLBERG, professor in Stockholm, editor of "Esperantisten," member of the L. K. (*Lingva Komitato-Lingvistie Committee*).
- L. DE BEACFRONT, linguist of renown, who has created Esperanto out of the rough and insufficient sketch of its inventor, and to whom Esperanto owes its existence and progress.
- L. BOLLACK, author of *la Langue bleue*.
- DR. W. BORGHUS, former vice-president of the German Esperanto Association.
- BAUDOUIN DE COURTENAY, professor of languages, University of St. Petersburg.
- DRS. L. COUTULAT and L. LEAU, greatest authorities on artificial languages, authors of "*Histoire de la Langue Universelle*."
- DR. M. W. FÖRSTER, president of the Intern. Committee on Weights and Measures, director of the observatory of Berlin.
- REV. H. A. GOWAN, professor of Oriental languages and philosophy, University of Washington.
- M. DE GUESNET, editor of "*Tra la Mondo*."
- J. R. IAGER, of the *Seattle Daily News*.
- P. D. HUGON, author of many textbooks.
- OTTO JESPERSEN, philologist of international reputation, professor University of Copenhagen.
- A. KANGAS, excellent linguist, president of the former N. Y. Esp. Soc., now president of the N. Y. Ilo Soc.
- COMMANDANT CH. LEMAIRE, former president of the Esperanto League of Belgium.
- RÉNÉ LEMAIRE, one of the founders of the *Société française pour la Propagation de l'Espéranto*.
- B. MACKENSEN, professor, San Antonio, Texas, one of the collaborators of *Idiom neutral*.
- O. H. MAYER, of Chicago, member of the LK.
- DR. L. E. MEIER, author of the best German Esperanto textbook.
- BARON L. D'ORCZY, former president of the Esperanto League of the Adriatic.
- DR. WILHELM OSTWALD, philosopher of renown, professor of chemistry, University of Leipzig.
- M. CH. SCHMIDT, founder of the first Esperanto journal, "*l'Esperantisto*."
- PASTOR FR. SCHNEEBERGER, president of the second Esperanto congress at Geneva.
- DR. M. SCHUCHARDT, member of the Imperial Academy of Austria, prof., University of Graz.
- DR. M. TALMEY, linguist, member of the LK., founder and first president of the former N. Y. Esp. Soc., author of a complete Esperanto textbook.
- Etc., etc., etc.

*The number of prominent lists, Ilo societies and Ilo journals has grown so considerably since this address was delivered, January 21st, 1909, that a list much bigger than the following can be cited now, March, 1909 (Remark of the Publishers).

Although Ilo has been promulgated only about a year ago, numerous Ilo societies are already in existence, many of them being old Esperanto societies which have given up Esperanto. There are Ilo societies in

New York, Seattle, San Antonio (Texas), London, Whitley Bay, Chatham, Birmingham, Carlisle, Manchester, Glasgow, Berlin, Dresden (16 groups), Mainz, Hamburg, Hannover, Leipzig, Dessau, Reims, Ferrol (Spain), Solothurn, Zürich, Paris, Verdun, St. Brieuc, etc., etc., etc.

Many Esperanto journals have given up the ghost, as *Medicina Revuo*, *American Esperanto Journal*, *Esperanto News*, *Meksika Lumturo*, *Lumo* (Canada), *Tra la Mondo*, *Roma Esperantisto*, etc., etc.

Journals in Ilo and for Ilo are the following:

Progreso, *Germana Ilisto*, *Internaciona Socialisto*, *Internaciona Kuriero*, *Progresido*, *L'Esperantiste*, *Belga Sonorilo*, etc.

The following journals publish a section in Ilo: *G. P.'s Weekly*, *Ro, Verda Standardo*, *Esperantisten*, *Correspondence International*.

An American Ilo magazine is about to be started in Cincinnati, with the co-operation and under the auspices of the New York Ilo Society.

UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE PUBLISHING CO.,

55 West 126th St.

New York, March, 1909.

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TITLE**